

## NCDOT Aims to Help Motorists Save Time, Money During the Holidays



NCDOT will limit construction activities along major routes this holiday season to save travelers time and money.

As families travel over the river and through the woods for holiday celebrations, the N.C. Department of Transportation will suspend most road construction activities on major routes across the state to help make their trips a little smoother.

By avoiding traffic delays, motorists can reach their destinations safely and efficiently, while cutting down on fuel consumption and costs. The list of closures will be available closer to the holidays on the Department's [website](#).

Here are some additional tips for safely navigating the highways during the holiday travel season:

- Leave early to get a head start on your drive. Travel at non-peak hours when possible;

### Stay Connected



### NC Transportation Now



On the latest N.C. Transportation Now, the department shares safety tips for drone use, DMV offices across the state get upgrades for next-generation driver licenses, and NCDOT wants to hear what your favorite trails are around the state. To learn more about these stories, visit NCDOT's [YouTube Channel](#).



### NCDOT Helping Traffic Flow Smoothly Around Christmas Town, USA

- Stay alert. Even if construction work is suspended, you may encounter narrowed lanes and traffic shifts in work zones;
- Be patient and obey the posted speed limit;
- Use alternate routes, when possible, to avoid traffic congestion;
- Stay informed. Real-time travel information is available online and over the phone by dialing 511;
- Don't drive drowsy. Travel at times when you are normally awake, and take frequent breaks; and
- Avoid distracted driving. When drivers stop focusing on the road ahead, they react more slowly to traffic conditions and are more likely to be involved in an accident.

For real-time travel information at any time, visit the [Travel section](#) of the NCDOT website or follow NCDOT on [Twitter](#).

## Concord Bridge Named in Honor of City Leader, Educator



Mrs. Ella Mae Small, wife of Allen T. Small, stands beside the newly unveiled plaque on the bridge named for her husband.

The N.C. Department of Transportation, together with the City of Concord, dedicated the bridge on Cabarrus Avenue West in honor of a longtime educator, leader and public servant.

The bridge on Cabarrus Avenue West that carries traffic over the railroad is now known as the *Allen T. Small Bridge*. Mr. Small, who passed away in 2006, was a pillar in the Concord community, and the bridge named in his honor leads to the part of the city in which he lived and worked.

"The City of Concord is pleased to be a part of this tribute to Allen, who was a public servant of highest order," said Concord Mayor

Miles of brake lights ahead: It's one holiday light display no one wants to see.

And since more than half a million visitors will travel through McAdenville in Gaston County this holiday season for a glimpse of the town's iconic light display, the N.C. Department of Transportation is working to help traffic flow smoothly into and around Christmas Town, USA.

The McAdenville light display began Tuesday, Dec. 1, and continues through Saturday, Dec. 26. The lights will shine Monday through Friday from 5:30-9:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 5:30-11 p.m.

Keeping traffic flowing on the roads that lead to Christmas Town, USA, is a priority for NCDOT. By helping to manage traffic for McAdenville's visitors, the Department can also keep things flowing for motorists who are passing through to other destinations.

The Department placed message boards on I-85 informing motorists of the following:

- Drivers coming from Charlotte should use U.S. 74 (Wilkinson Boulevard) into McAdenville; an alternate route is from I-85 South to exit 27 (N.C. 273) to U.S. 74;
- Motorists driving north on I-85 should use exit 22 (Lowell) into McAdenville; and
- The ramp from I-85 North to Exit 23 (N.C. 7) will be closed nightly during events.

Because of the large number of vehicles expected in the area,

Scott Padgett. "He served as a teacher and principal not far from where we are standing; he truly cared about young people and pushed them to succeed far beyond what they believed they could do. As a council member, he was very interested in economic development and creating jobs for those thousands of young people he cared for as students."

The North Carolina Board of Transportation approved a resolution to name the bridge in Mr. Small's honor at its August 2015 meeting.



"This honor is particularly meaningful because this bridge serves as an entrance to the community where Mr. Small lived and worked," said Tracy F. Dodson, who represents NCDOT's Division 10 on the state's Board of

Transportation. "The bridge is a gateway to historic downtown Concord, which Mr. Small often referred to as the 'heart of the community' and the 'core of the apple.'"

Mr. Small's wife and current city council member, Ella Mae Small, also spoke at the dedication ceremony.

"Thank you to the North Carolina Board of Transportation for this meaningful tribute to my husband, and to Mayor Padgett and my colleagues on City Council for making the request to honor his service to the community in this way," Council Member Small said. "The Allen T. Small Bridge will endure as a fitting memorial to a family man and educator who spent his life serving God, his country, Cabarrus County, and the City of Concord."

Additional photos from the bridge dedication ceremony can be found on NCDOT's [Flickr page](#).

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## Construction of Weddington Road Interchange Accelerated by 3 Years



Construction of the Weddington Road interchange with I-485 will be

motorists are advised to slow down and expect delays during the holiday season. Traffic volume is typically heavier on Friday and Saturday evenings.

For more information on Christmas Town, USA, including parking and other traffic information, click [here](#).

All McAdenville photos courtesy of Steve Rankin.



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## NCDOT Offers Tips for Drone Safety

This holiday season, one of the most popular gifts could literally fly off the shelves.

Whether they're called quadcopters, radio controlled planes or any of the high-tech brand names, drones are expected to be big sellers this year, with some estimating as many as 700,000 will make their way into Americans' homes by the end of December.

All of these devices fall under the category of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). UAS technology is an exciting and evolving field, which can lead to confusion for both UAS owners and the general public. The N.C. Department of Transportation is offering tips to help UAS owners enjoy their new technology while protecting citizens' safety and privacy.



expedited by three years thanks to the 2015 state budget.

## ***Schedules of seven other local projects also expedited***

Governor Pat McCrory recently announced that many transportation projects across the state will see construction dates moved up thanks to the signed 2015 state budget. Included among those projects is construction of the Weddington Road interchange with Interstate 485, as well as seven other local projects designed to improve mobility in the Charlotte region.

"The reforms I signed into law will get these roads built sooner," Governor McCrory said. "The primary purpose of the reforms was to ensure transportation funds were being spent on transportation projects and not diverted to other state programs."

Construction of the new Weddington Road interchange with I-485 was accelerated from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2016. Additional Charlotte-area projects with schedules expedited by the recently signed state budget include:

- Upgrading the existing interchange at I-77 and Gilead Road in Mecklenburg County: Right-of-way accelerated from fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2017 and construction accelerated from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2018;
- Widening of West Catawba Avenue from N.C. 73/Sam Furr Road to east of Torrence Chapel Road in Mecklenburg County: Construction of Segment B accelerated from fiscal year 2021 to fiscal year 2020;
- Widening of N.C. 73 from N.C. 16 Business in Lincoln County to West Catawba Avenue in Mecklenburg County: Construction of Segment A accelerated from fiscal year 2024 to fiscal year 2023;
- Widening of John Street-Old Monroe Road from Trade Street to Wesley Chapel-Stouts Road: Construction of Segment B accelerated from fiscal year 2024 to fiscal year 2022 and right-of-way acquisition for Segment C accelerated from fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2020;
- Reconfiguring to a superstreet design the intersection of U.S. 74/Roosevelt Boulevard and Rocky River Road in Union County: Right-of-way acquisition accelerated from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2017 and construction accelerated from fiscal year 2021 to fiscal year 2018;
- Widening of U.S. 21/Statesville Road from Northcross Center Court to Westmoreland Road in Mecklenburg County: Right-of-way acquisition accelerated from fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2020 and construction accelerated from fiscal year 2024 to fiscal year 2020; and
- Widening of U.S. 21 from Gilead Road to Holly Point Drive

"We're proud of North Carolina's legacy of being first in manned flight," said NCDOT Secretary Nick Tennyson. "The academic and industry researchers in our state will make us a leader in unmanned flight as well."

NCDOT's [Division of Aviation](#) has established guidelines for UAS operation in North Carolina. Both the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the NCDOT Division of Aviation classify UAS flight operations by three categories:

- Recreational - Any UAS flight that is conducted solely for the purpose of recreation;
- Government - Any UAS flight conducted by a government entity to support their work; and
- Commercial - Any UAS flight that serves a business purpose or provides a business benefit, even if that benefit is indirect.

Government and commercial UAS operators must adhere to state and federal requirements established by the North Carolina General Assembly and the [FAA](#). Each classification is subject to specific regulations and guidelines.

Many of the UAS owners who receive a drone during this holiday season will use them for purely recreational purposes. While recreational UAS flights are not heavily regulated, the FAA and model aircraft enthusiast groups have established a number of guidelines which should be followed to ensure a fun and safe experience:

- Always fly below an altitude of 400 feet and fly within

in Mecklenburg County: Right-of-way acquisition accelerated from fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2020 and construction accelerated from fiscal year 2024 to fiscal year 2020.



Division 10 Board Member

Tracy F. Dodson

"These projects are designed to enhance mobility in the greater Charlotte area, and amendments to the state's 10-year transportation plan will help us deliver them to the public sooner than anticipated," said Tracy F. Dodson, Board of Transportation member representing Division 10, which includes Anson, Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, Stanly and Union counties.

The state budget included additional funding for transportation through the

elimination of the transfer from the Highway Fund to the General Fund and through other fee and rate changes resulting in an additional \$1.6 billion over the next 10 years for transportation construction. The additional money allows NC Transportation to add or accelerate a total of 248 construction projects across the state.

Ninety-two new segments of highway projects can now be funded in the recently approved 2016-2025 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the department's 10-year construction plan. The construction schedules of another 90 highway projects already approved in the STIP are being sped up. An additional 66 non-highway projects are also being added to or accelerated in the program.

The department followed the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) law to identify new projects (either segments or entire projects) at the statewide, regional and division levels. The projects were identified from those previously scored based on the same weights and criteria (data) used to develop the 2016-2025 STIP.

For the complete expanded and accelerated list of highway and non-highway projects, go to the NCDOT's [website](#). Additional information is available at the NCDOT's Strategic Transportation Investments [website](#).

The schedule changes, called amendments, were presented to the Board of Transportation for their review at their December meeting, with the Board's approval expected in January 2016.

your direct line of sight;

- Do not fly within 5 miles of an airport, near stadiums or other public events, or for compensation;
- Do not fly UAS that weigh more than 55 pounds; and
- Do not fly at night, even if your UAS is equipped with lights.

"UAS technology is fun and exciting, but it needs to be used responsibly," said Division of Aviation Director Bobby Walston. "These guidelines will help ensure the safety of people in the air and on the ground."

UAS operators, whether recreational, government or commercial, should keep in mind that North Carolina has laws governing drone use. UAS users are subject to all North Carolina laws, even if UAS technology is not specifically mentioned. Current and potential drone owners can find more information about state and federal UAS regulations on the Division of Aviation's [website](#).



## NCDOT News

Want to learn more about what's going on at the N.C. Department of Transportation? Visit the Department's [website](#) or head to NCDOT's [Newsroom](#) for the latest updates.

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